

**MR. AND MRS. HARRY LEE CARTER NATURAL AREA
CLASS II NATURAL-SCIENTIFIC STATE NATURAL AREA**

COUNTY: Franklin

7.5' QUADRANGLE: Sinking Cove & Sewanee

PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Cumberland Plateau

ACREAGE: 375 Acres

OWNERSHIP: State of Tennessee

YEAR DESIGNATED: 1975

DESCRIPTION: The Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lee Carter Natural Area is a 375-acre natural area located in Franklin County that is part of the South Cumberland Recreation Area. Named after the couple that donated the land to the state, this natural area protects part of a large solution valley associated with the karst erosional processes characteristic of the Cumberland Plateau escarpment. A significant cave system extends from Lost Cove to the head of Crow Creek. The stream systems draining into Lost Cove disappear into the Lost Cove Cave at the Big Sinks and travel underground for over a mile, emerging at the main entrance Buggytop Cave. This impressive cave entrance is 100 feet wide and 80 feet high. Peter Cave is the other main cave entrance. There have been considerable archeological artifacts of the Woodland and Mississippian Period excavated from the entrance. The artifacts are on display at University of the South in Sewanee.

The cave environment is fragile. Visitors choosing to explore the cave should be careful not to disturb any formations or small animals that may be seen. The area is also home to several rare species of plants, animals and unique plant communities. Examples of rare plants include Cumberland rosinweed (*Silphium brachiatum*) and Eggert's sunflower (*Helianthus eggertii*). The forested area abounds with oaks, hickories, maples, and many shrubs. A rich mixed mesophytic forest is found in the cove near the cave entrance. This forest community has numerous dominant species including sugar maple, buckeye, tulip poplar, buckeye, and basswood. Many of the slopes and spurs are an oak-hickory forest community with white oak prevalent on mid slopes and scarlet, black, and chestnut oak occurring on drier upper slopes. A new forest is forming here to replace the forest removed by past logging activities. There is also a limestone barrens community above the Buggytop cave entrance that is home to native grasses and other barrens plants like liatris, rattlesnake master, and agave. The natural area has a wonderful spring wildflower display that adds much seasonal color to the forest floor.

SITE MANAGEMENT: South Cumberland Recreation Area

(<http://www.tnstateparks.com/SouthCumberland/>), 11745 US 41 Monteagle, TN 37356, phone (931) 924-2980. Division of Natural Areas, 401 Church Street, 7th Floor L&C Annex, Nashville, TN 37243-0447, phone (615) 532-0431.

PUBLIC ACCESS: Public access allowed; parking and hiking trails provided. The natural area is operated by Tennessee State Parks. There is a parking area and a 2-mile (one way) hiking trail provided. Cave tours are available.

DIRECTIONS: To Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lee Carter Natural Area: take exit 134 off I-24, turn left toward Sewanee. Go through Sewanee and then turn left on Highway 56. Continue 10 miles to the parking area located on the left. To South Cumberland Recreation Area: take exit 134 off I-24 and turn right to Monteagle then turn left on Highway 41/56 to Tracy City. Continue for 3 miles to the visitor center located on the left.